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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, TAL AFAR; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution was the major editorial theme of the daily newspapers on September 11, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A.](#) "The Constitution, A Step Forward"  
(Al-Adala Newspaper, affiliated with SCIRI, published this page 14 editorial by Adnan Hardan)

"The fruit bearing tree is felled with a stone as the proverb says, and here they are now hunting in wastewater. They are trying to put impediments in front of any new step the new Iraq is trying to take forward. These hindrance are in the form of vicious actions based on a return to the era of dictatorships. Their members are hard at work proving Machiavelli's theory that the end justifies the means, and attempting to sow the seeds of sectarianism and foment sedition among members of one family who all share the same house. More than this they are destroying everything in a most brutal way, killing the innocent wherever and whoever they are.

"The most fruitful step for Iraqis, following the January election, is the constitution. A document has been absent from the people of Iraq for the last 35 years; laws were made one day and then canceled the next. Exemptions were issued for friends and relatives (e.g. the law exempting relatives of the former regime from military service) while the destitute were sentenced to death. In the fading light of dictatorship, the path toward freedom is lit and despite differences and healthy debates over the constitution the voice of the people will cry out during the coming referendum to ensure the continuity of the democratic process."

[1B.](#) "On the Threshold of Tal Afar"  
(Al-Bayyan, affiliated with the Islamic Ad-Dawa Party led by Al-Ja'afari, published this page-three column by Salim Rasoul about military operations in Tal Afar)

"Yesterday, I heard from citizens of Tal Afar, who left their city to save their lives, how terrorists desecrated the area and targeted all sects in the city. This proves that Ba'athist terror does not belong to any nationality, sect or religion. In spite of this tragedy in Tal Afar, the Iraqi people continued helping their brothers. For instance, citizens of Karbala and Najaf provided displaced citizens of Tal Afar with shelter and this indicates how Iraqis are united in disasters.

"A military expert said that Tal Afar is suffering from a deterioration in its security situation because it is a border town. Everyone knows that terrorists in Tal Afar allege to be part of the resistance. However, it has become very clear that what was happening in Tal Afar has nothing to do with resistance. Citizens of Tal Afar suffered from killings, beheading, looting and other crimes and I think such acts cannot be described as resistance against the occupation. Today, none of the Iraqi people accept such statements and Iraqis know exactly who is behind such calls. Those who issue such statements want to disrupt the progress of the political process in Iraq so that they can control the country again in the name of killing and destruction. We will no longer accept those calls that provoke terror."

[1C.](#) "The Last Roll of the Constitutional Dice"  
(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK led by Talabani, published this page-two editorial by Faryad Rawanduzi on Sunni attempts to reject the constitution)

"Will the Sunni groups that oppose the constitution be able to reject it in the upcoming referendum? We know that in politics everything is possible. But, for instance, if the Shiites wanted to reject this constitution, the result would be very clear and I think there would be no need to hold a referendum. If we look at three Shiite provinces in the south of Iraq, we will see that they are sufficient to reject the constitution. The same thing can be applied to the Kurds. Concerning the Sunnis, there are four provinces where Sunnis are the majority. The first is Diyala province, which could be a weak card which Sunnis cannot bank on because there are Shiites, Kurds and Turkmen living in this province.

"Those three groups will absolutely accept the constitution. The second province is Salah Ad-Din (Tikrit), which also cannot be considered a stronghold because there are Shiites, Kurds and Turkmen (the majority of whom are Shiites) who live in this province. In Ninewa (Mosul), thousands of Kurds have left the city because of intimidation by Sunni terrorist groups and they fled to Kurdish areas outside of the city of Mosul. If those Kurds are not able to participate in the referendum and all the Sunni Arabs in Mosul do, then Ninewa could reach the 67% ratio and reject the constitution. On the other hand, if all the Kurds, Turkmen and Christians are able to participate in the referendum, it will be difficult for the Sunnis in Mosul to reach the 67% needed to defeat it...

"Al-Anbar (Ramadi) will be the last province and it does not contain any ethnic or sectarian diversities. Therefore, all indications are that this province will reject the constitution. This is because the Association of Muslim Scholars and the Sunni groups that are loyal to Saddam will stand against the constitution.

"It seems that those who want to reject the constitution will not be able to gather the 67% total in three provinces as dictated by paragraph C of Article 61 of the TAL. The current Sunni groups that negotiate in the constitutional process know this fact and will try their best efforts to hinder the birth of this constitution. For this reason, they are trying to roll doubles in the constitutional dice game so that they can get out of this crisis."

**1D. "Agreement on the Constitution"**  
(Al-Fourat, independent, anti-coalition, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Zahra Al-Talkani on the upcoming referendum)

"Disagreement is normal everywhere and nobody can guarantee that there are people who can agree with each other in any country. A plurality of viewpoints is a healthy matter because it develops and promotes these points of view. Thus, the Iraqi people will not unanimously accept the constitution. Only constitutions that were drafted by tyrants had 100% of votes because dictators forced people to accept their constitutions and when people went to vote they were afraid the security forces might punish them for rejecting that constitution.

"The Iraqi constitution has witnessed many stages since its birth and this constitution was accepted by 95% of the Iraqi people. The disagreement is only over a few issues. However, these issues are very important because they deal with the country's destiny. We must focus our future dialogue on the rejection or acceptance of this constitution. This constitution was drafted while mortar rounds were falling on the constitutional committee's headquarters. This constitution was written after many Iraqis sacrificed their lives for it. On the other hand, some Iraqis consider this constitution to be an imperfect document that requires amendment. If we explore this constitution, we will find that it enshrines many important issues that will guarantee the rights of Iraqi people for hundreds of years. In addition, the constitutional committee, which drafted this constitution, made efforts to craft it in a way that satisfies all Iraqis. However, we know that the Iraqi people are difficult to please. But, I am sure that Iraqis will reach an agreement on the constitution and we will be waiting for the coming days to see the results."

**1E. "The Constitution and the Guarantees"**  
(Ad-Dustoor, independent, published this front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh about the constitution)

"There is an insistent question that cannot be ignored about the constitution that was submitted to the National Assembly and will be put to vote in mid-October. The question is, who will insure that all of the good principles and legislation in the draft constitution will be implemented? What are the true guarantees and criteria for real justice and equality? Who will stand against those who do not want to implement the constitution and those who work against it? Who will ensure that there will be no revolutions or coup d'etats

against the authority of the constitution?

"Moreover, the legislative, judicial and the executive branches will not be able to protect the constitution because they all will be under threat if a certain group plans for a coup and then controls them. However, only the Iraqi people can answer these questions. They will protect the constitution by ratifying it in the upcoming referendum. Here, lays the real power of the nation, if the populace has an opportunity to be educated and become more conversant about the constitution and more aware of how important it is to have constitutional rights than this is the difference between modernity and illiteracy-- between democracy and dictatorship and between slavery and freedom. When people understand these facts, then no one will dare abuse those rights for any possible reason."

1F. "No Waiting for An SOS"  
(Al-Adala, affiliated with the Supreme Council for an Islamic Revolution in Iraq - SCIRI, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Ali Khaleef)

"The Iraqi government has done well by intervening militarily in Tal Afar to rid the city of terrorists who have occupied it, started to kill its innocent citizens, and commit genocide against the people who live in that peaceful area. However, this operation should have been conducted before. The Iraqi government is responsible for all Iraqi land and all Iraqis should protect their people and land without waiting for an SOS.

"They should eliminate terrorists throughout Iraq. Those criminals killed our people solely because they belonged to different sects or religions. The same thing happens in Baghdad; there are many families who have begun leaving their homes in the Al-Doura area because terrorists have intimidated them and therefore they cannot live peacefully any longer.

"We do not want to create another Tal Afar in Baghdad or in any other area in Iraq. Instead, we want to see the rule of law spread and security cover the entire country. Everyday we hear and see intimidation against people and we know that there are groups trying to foster and support terrorism in Iraq. I think those are more dangerous than the terrorists themselves because they provide shelter and cover for terrorists who kill innocent people. I am sure that those who conduct killings and kidnappings in Baghdad are not necessarily residents of the city but instead come from outside Baghdad. Indeed, our problem is those who support terrorists; the government must enact quick measures against anyone trying to terrorize innocent citizens so that we will not hear another SOS like the one heard in Tal Afar."

SATTERFIELD